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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an attempt to develop a theoretical model to guide the collection and interpretation of empirical data related to the administrative behavior of school principals. The author selects Griffith's decision-making theory as the conceptual framework for a study of the administrative behaviors of a group of New York City principals. A feedback system utilizing administrative interns as participant-observers is described, and four categories of decision-making behavior are identified. Although no attempt is made to mold these sets of behaviors into a competency format, the author suggests that his model fosters systematic study of the relationships between given decision-making patterns and the achievement of organizational objectives. (Author/JG)

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DECISION-MAKING ADMINISTRATIVE BEHAVIOR:

FIELD-CENTERED PROFILE OF THE URBAN SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

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FOREWORD

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Introduction

Among the needed break-throughs confronting researchers seeking to identify and capture the competencies implicit in teacher and administrator behaviors is that of advancing a general theory to guide the collection and interpretation of empirical data. In the face of this theoretical ambiguity the elaboration of statistical analyses or of coding procedures has produced little in the way of defensible results.[1] This paper, dealing with a study funded by the 1973-1974 Faculty Research Award Program of the City University of New York (CUNY), demonstrates a theorizing effort. Selected by the author as a framework for an empirical study of building principals' administrative behavior is Griffiths' decision-making theory. The application of a feedback system for the periodic updating of field-based information on these behaviors is described and four different sets of administrative behaviors manifested by a group of building principals in the City School District of New York are presented. While no attempt has been made to analyze these sets of behaviors into competency format, it is in describing a model for the reliable and valid initial identification of the field-based behaviors from which competencies may be derived that this study is a first step toward the development of a competency/performance-based curriculum of preparation for future building principals.

The model described has evolved from a three year project of the Advanced Certificate Program in Educational Administration and Supervision, School of Education, Brooklyn College of CUNY for the design of a competency/performance-based curriculum leading to New York State certification as a building principal.[2,3] Its immediate significance is best illustrated by the statements of Dr. Mike Van Ryn, Chief, Bureau of In-Service Education, New York State Education Department, who indicates that the thrust

in the State continues steadfastly to be toward the assessment of a candidate's performance as the basis for certification.[4]

Formulating the Problem

The problem is simply stated: What are the types and the frequencies of the administrative behaviors manifested by a group of urban building principals?

The possible approaches to the solution of this problem are three.[5,6,7] The first relies on the testimony of expert witnesses (college faculty, textbooks in educational administration and supervision, community members, and building principals). Since this approach yields findings and conclusions based on private theories not explicitly supported by empirical data it is considered to be unreliable. The second approach relies on observation without an encompassing theory; hence no theory based criteria are advanced to set priorities among the behaviors catalogued.[8] The third approach, used in this study, utilizes a general theory base to gather and analyze empirical data; as a consequence testable hypotheses can be formulated to guide further research.

The Theory as a Guide to Data Collection

Postulated by Griffiths is that the central function of the chief administrator of any organization is to make decisions. It is in the decision-making process that the administrator's essential behavior is observed.[9] Thus the writer perceived a decision-making behavior as the locus of a cluster of interrelated competencies. This view stands up when overlayed by a review of the three types of organizational decisions defined by Griffiths and their implications for a study of building principals' behavior. The three types of decisions are: intermediary, appropriate, and creative.

An intermediary decision is one in which the chief administrator "follow orders" by carrying out policy. The rules of the organization, in these decisions, engage the administrator's time and displace his or her energies. An appellate decision is one in which he or she is called upon to settle disputes between or among subordinates in the organization. Griffiths postulates that the frequency of the occurrence of appellate decisions is an indication of organizational health, viz., "too many" appellate decisions indicate rampant organizational conflicts which the administrator may be helping to create but in any case which must be handled to the detriment of the long-range goals of the organization. Creative decisions result in new policy, and new directions for the organization. It is arguable that the extent to which an administrator is able or willing to commit time and energy to creative decisions is the extent to which an organization's goals are likely to be fulfilled.

Observing Building Principals

How was systematic access to building principals decision-making behaviors achieved?

During the 1973-74 academic year, administrative interns were sponsored in each of 40 New York City schools. In agreement with the building principal and the college's field supervisor, the intern's schedule was arranged (for from one to ten hours per week) for him or her to observe all formal and informal meetings held by the principal on-the-job. For the Fall 1973 term these scheduled hours of observation were planned to occur during the 40 school days between October 1st and November 30th; for the Spring 1974 term, between March 1st and May 3rd. Different groups of interns and building principals were involved each semester. The level distribution of the schools in which these observations occurred is given

in Table I. It is important to note that while these 40 schools do not constitute a representative sampling of the more than 900 school organizations in the City School District of New York; 30 of the 40 did receive Title I (ESEA) funds for the school year 1973-1974. Accordingly it may be inferred that the rate of reading disability in these schools was significant. Noteworthy, too, is that all of the participating building principals have been given a "satisfactory" rating by their respective superintendents for the 1973-1974 school year.

TABLE I - LEVEL DISTRIBUTION
OF BUILDING PRINCIPALS OBSERVED
BY ADMINISTRATIVE INTERNS
(FALL 1973, SPRING 1974)

Level	Fall 1973	Spring 1974	Totals
High School	4	2	6
Junior High	2	2	4
Intermediate	1	2	3
Elementary	11	16	27
TOTALS	18	22	40

These interns were oriented to the role of participant observer.[10] During the first three weeks of each semester the interns received intensive briefings on the techniques of observing and recording data descriptive of their principals' decision-making behavior. Illustrative decisions were presented to help ensure inter-observer reliability. In addition, the writer met the interns weekly in Internship Seminar to resolve questions of technique which arose during the 40 days of data collection. Throughout, emphasis

was placed on the importance of recording only the administrative decisions which the interns had witnessed during the agreed-upon scheduled hours for observation. Hearsay and the decision-making behavior of principals which were witnessed during casual encounters were not to be recorded.

An observation form (See Figure 1) was designed by the writer and used by the interns to maintain a daily log. For each observed decision the following data were to be recorded:

Column 1

- Who (role only) or what stimulated the principal's decision?

(E.g., a teacher, a parent, a fire in the building)

Column 2

-What was the content of the stimulus?

(E.g., a teacher's request for assistance in techniques of class control)

Column 3

-What were the factors(numbered) considered by the principal in arriving at the decision?

(E.g., before the decision was made to assist this teacher the principal considered two factors: 1) the teacher's experience, 2) his or her availability).

Column 4

-What was the outcome of the request (or stimulus) to the building principal for a decision: Was the request Granted (G), Denied (D), or Postponed (P)?

(E.g., the building principal's agreement to demonstrate techniques of clear control is recorded as having an outcome G).

FIGURE 1. LOG RECORDING FORM

[redacted] COLLEGE / SCHOOL OF EDUCATION / ADVANCED CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION & SUPERVISION

INTERN _____ _____ FIELD SUPERVISOR _____ SCHOOL _____
LAST NAME FIRST

(1) [redacted] STIMULATED DECISION	(2) CONTENT OF THE STIMULUS FOR A DECISION (USE INFINITIVE)	(3) ALL THE FACTORS (NUMBERED) EVIDENT IN ARRIVING AT THE DECISION	(4) OUTCOME GRANTED (G) DENIED (D) POSTPONED (P)

TODAY'S DATE _____
(NEW DAY; NEW PAGE)

The Coding Procedure

The taxonomy of administrative functions of the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA)[11] was adapted as the basis for a decision-by-decision coding of the interns' logs. The relevant categories of this taxonomy are:

EP - Educational Program

SD - Staff Development

CR - Community Relations

MS - Managing-the-School

Analogies between these administrative functions[12] (with one adaptation: the change of Community Relations (CR) to mean Conflict Resolution) and Griffiths' theory of decision-making types are discernible.

UCEA	GRIFFITHS
Educational Program (EP)	Creative
Staff Development (SD)	Creative
Conflict Resolution (CR)	Appellate
Managing-the-School (MS)	Intermediary

The rationale for linking EP and SD to the creative decision-type is that both the EP and the SD administrative behaviors serve to adapt schools' programs to pupil needs. Innovative programs (EP) can after all be implemented only by a teaching staff that is trained and educated (SD). CR by definition is an appellate function as MS is an intermediary function.

The UCEA taxonomy's categories translate Griffiths' decision-making behaviors (which apply generally to all types of organizations) into a value-free terminology for expressing the leadership functions related to the administration of an urban school organization. Thus, these categories lend themselves to the identification of recognizable building principal behaviors to which programs of preparation in educational administration can relate as they strive to design curricula which are field-centered.

The coding of each intern's log required initially the identification of each recorded decision as EP, SD, CR, or MS. Each such coding was then weighted by the number of the factors (cf. Figure 1, Column 2) considered by the building principal in reaching the decision. To illustrate: if the factors considered by the principal before deciding to provide assistance to a teacher (an SD decision) in class control are: 1) the teacher's experience, 2) his or her own availability (two factors), this behavior was so weighted and coded finally as SD2. Thus reflected is the extent to which the building principal perceived the request as relatively simple to act on or as more complex (if, for example, 5 or 6 factors were needed to be considered).

The operational definitions used to code the logs at the end of the periods of data collection appear in Figure 2 (EP), Figure 3 (SD), Figure 4 (CR), and Figure 5 (MS).

Figure 2. CRITERIA FOR THE DEFINITIONS OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP (EP) ADMINISTRATIVE BEHAVIORS

Source of Request/Stimulus	Content of Request/Stimulus
A. Self-initiated programs or activities that are implemented <u>without evidence of pressure</u> from: Central Board District Office memoranda or personnel students, parents, staff (teachers, <u>et al</u>) community persons, groups or lay persons	School goal setting - management by objectives policy creating introduction of instructional programs or developing alternative programs planning of new scheduling procedures creative use of personnel
B. Self-initiated programs or activities that are implemented from ideas, suggestions, concepts derived <u>as a result of</u> attendance at professional meetings, conferences, courses or ideas suggested by reading of professional literature or models provided by other principals	introduction of systematic evaluation or assessment procedures development of curricula revisions and additions planning new after-school programs that extend instructional goals developing innovative ways to involve community (parents and community-at-large) developing innovative approaches to involve students in curricula changes in both cognitive and affective domains

Figure 3. CRITERIA FOR THE DEFINITIONS OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT (SD) ADMINISTRATIVE BEHAVIORS

Source of Request/Stimulus	Content of Request/Stimulus
A. Initiated by any regular pedogogical staff members including: teachers, student teachers, paraprofessionals, assistant principals district office central board personnel	Selection of all school personnel assignment of all school personnel evaluation of all school personnel Professional Assistance (individual or group -- by self or by referral to resource person) of: regular appointed teachers assistant principals substitutes student teachers paraprofessionals Professional Assistance in selection, evaluation of materials training in methodologies and techniques training in classroom management training in regular or basic methodologies and techniques training in pupil assessment and evaluation

Figure 4. CRITERIA FOR THE DEFINITIONS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION (CR) ADMINISTRATIVE BEHAVIORS

Source of Request/Stimulus

A. Activities - face-to-face oral or written that involve interpreting school or district policy to resolve conflict situations

B. Population Composition

parents, students,
teachers, lay persons,
administrators,
paraprofessionals,
security guard,
UFT chairman,
guidance counselors

C. Stimulus is directed at the principal regarding decisions related to:

pupil, e.g., pre-suspension hearings

union grievance procedures (Step I Level)

D. Populations involved may also be classified in this category if individuals involved are the target of the principal's decision(s) to prevent conflict.

E. Excluded are ES and SD matters.

Content of Request/Stimulus

Principal's decisions may be:

1) to refer (e.g., assistant principal, guidance counselor) or

2) to mediate,

3) to make final decision

If the principal approves a suggestion, it is coded as SD -- supportive of staff

If principal disapproves a suggestions or a recommendation, he is supportive of existing policy (school, district, central board). In this case, the decision is coded as MS.

Figure 5. CRITERIA FOR THE DEFINITIONS OF MANAGING-THE-SCHOOL (MS) ADMINISTRATIVE BEHAVIORS

Source of Request/Stimulus	Content of Request/Stimulus
A. Established school, district or central board policy in the forms of: -memoranda -letters -oral requests	Routine administrative and supervisory procedures: -school organization -scheduling -ordering of supplies, textbooks -lunchroom scheduling and monitoring -safety procedures fire drills security measures, including deployment of security personnel -plant maintenance -record keeping student records on a per student basis and on school-wide basis staff records - all personnel reports accounting for school funds
B. Requests from any source (students, school staff, parents, community, custodian or custodial staff) to enforce policy	
C. Does not require an immediate stimulus (policy may have been established before principal's service in the school, or at the beginning of the school year).	

To test the strength of these definitions, a common portion of the log was coded independently by each of three research assistants. The results of this pilot coding are given in Table 2.

TABLE 2. FREQUENCY OF AGREEMENT AMONG THREE INDEPENDENT CODINGS OF A COMMON PORTION OF THE LOGS OF ADMINISTRATIVE INTERNS

(FALL 1973, SPRING 1974)

	Agreement	Non-Agreement	Total
Observed	71	25	96
Expected	48	48	96

The reliability of the operational definitions was confirmed at the .01 level by application of the Chi Square Formula.

Findings

A summary of the types and frequencies of the administrative functions observed in the combined Fall 1973, and Spring 1974 logs is given in Table 3.

TABLE 3. TYPES AND FREQUENCIES OF THE OBSERVED ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS OF 40 BUILDING PRINCIPALS
(FALL 1973, SPRING 1974)

	EP	SD	CR	MS	Total
Totals	15	372	647	3011	4045
Percent (Rounded)	1%	9%	16%	74%	100%

The application of the Chi Square formula confirmed the significance of the frequencies found for EP, SD CR and MS, respectively, at the .01 level.

Finally, to obtain a representative sampling of the administrative behaviors reflected in the total (4045), the Per Cent (Rounded) of the occurrence of each administrative function was calculated and its proportion of occurrence in an arbitrarily selected, manageable number of 50 was determined.

The process for the selection of the stratified sampling of administrative behaviors is summarized in Table 4.

TABLE 4. THE RELATION BETWEEN THE NUMBER OF ADMINISTRATIVE BEHAVIORS TO BE RANDOMLY SELECTED OUT OF 50 TO THE PER CENT OF OCCURRENCE OF EACH ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTION

Administrative Function	% of Occurrence (Rounded)	No. of Behaviors Selected at Random Fall '73	Spring '74	Totals
EP	/ 1%	0	0	0
SD	9%	2	2	4
CR	16%	4	4	8
MS	74%	19	19	38
TOTALS	100%	25	25	50

Although the EP function's less than 1% of occurrence indicated its non-eligibility for selection, one illustrative EP behavior (randomly selected) is included.

The listing of administrative behaviors is given in Figure 6.

In summary, the operation of this model for the utilization of the interns' feedback of the observed decisions of building principals is depicted in Figure 7.

Figure 6. FIFTY-ONE ADMINISTRATIVE BEHAVIORS OF URBAN PRINCIPALS (FALL 1973, SPRING, 1974)

EP

1. To organize a self-contained classroom on the secondary school level

SD

1. To observe a lesson taught by a teacher
2. To conduct a post-observation conference with a teacher
3. To plan and lead a group conference with teachers to demonstrate new instructional materials
4. To assist substitute teachers in classroom management

CR

1. To involve parental cooperation in improving a child's conduct in school
2. To determine the alternate class placement of an acting-out child
3. To respond to a parent's request for a specific class placement of a child
4. To respond to a parent's request to make a teacher available for an unscheduled guidance conference
5. To arrange for the collection of data required for a pupil suspension hearing
6. To respond to reports from a security guard about pupils fighting in a classroom
7. To confer with the school Parents' Council on school policy
8. To order library and text books which reflect community norms

Figure 6. (cont'd)

MS

1. To formulate goals and objectives for the next academic year
2. To lead a meeting of assistant principals to communicate school district and central board policy decisions
3. To publish a calendar of daily events
4. To publish an end-of-year calendar
5. To schedule departmental and grade staff conferences
6. To organize school-wide subject area fairs
7. To distribute courses of study and curriculum bulletins to staff members as needed
8. To analyze the results of school-wide standardized tests to determine pupil instructional needs
9. To organize a school-wide standardized testing program
10. To replenish textbooks for the next academic year
11. To communicate guidelines for the reorganization of classes for the next academic year
12. To schedule assembly programs
13. To interview persons volunteering to assist in classroom instruction
14. To establish cooperative working relationships with community social service agencies
15. To establish a format and routines for teachers' reporting of pupil attendance on a daily basis
16. To evaluate and arrange the discharge of long-term absent pupils
17. To plan the follow-up of pupil lateness
18. To enforce guidelines for the release of an ill child to go home
19. To secure medical attention for a child injured in school
20. To schedule fire drills in accordance with legal requirements

Figure 6. (cont'd)

MS

21. To schedule teachers to supervise pupils in the lunchroom

22. To establish and enforce procedures for safe pupil entrance and dismissal

23. To fulfill the requirements of the teachers' union agreement as to filling vacant compensatory time positions

24. To fulfill the requirements of the teachers' union agreement as to class coverage by subject area specialists

25. To fulfill the requirements of the teachers' union agreement as to upper limit of class enrollment

26. To fulfill the requirements of the union agreement as to auxiliary educational personnel

27. To lead in the development of a dress code by teachers

28. To recruit substitute teachers

29. To divide up the class of an absent teacher when no substitute teacher is available

30. To evaluate the request by a teacher for the approval of medical expenses for an alleged line-of-duty accident

31. To implement the security policy on school visitors

32. To arrange the distribution and the collection of teacher data request forms (New York State)

33. To screen fund-raising appeals to the staff from private agencies

34. To respond to the school custodian's request that teachers cooperate with the custodial staff

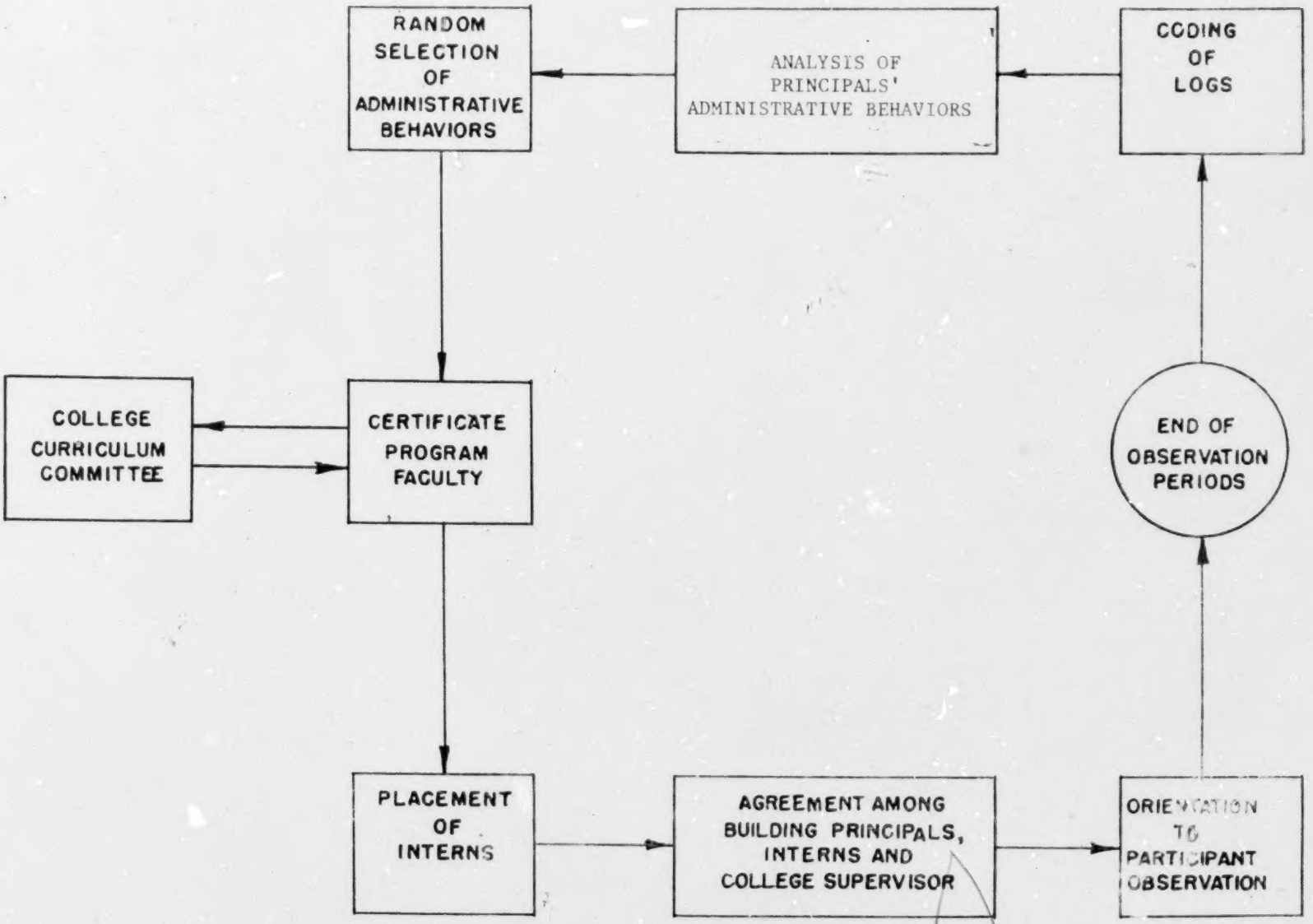
35. To plan a program to prevent vandalism

36. To establish procedure for scheduling teachers' use of the school auditorium and gymnasium

37. To program and monitor the instructional bell schedule

38. To determine alternative exits and entrances during school's modernization

FIGURE 7. THE MODEL FOR THE UTILIZATION OF INTERNS' FEEDBACK OF THE OBSERVED DECISIONS OF BUILDING PRINCIPALS


RANDOM SELECTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE BEHAVIORS
ANALYSIS OF PRINCIPALS' ADMINISTRATIVE BEHAVIORS
CODING OF LOGS
COLLEGE CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
CERTIFICATE PROGRAM FACULTY
END OF OBSERVATION PERIODS
PLACEMENT OF INTERNS
AGREEMENT AMONG BUILDING PRINCIPALS, INTERNS AND COLLEGE SUPERVISOR
ORIENTATION TO PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Summary, Conclusions, and Implications for Future Research

This study describes the operation of a model for the development of 1) a theory-based empirically rooted profile of administrative behaviors of a group of urban school building principals, in terms of administrative functions educational program (EP), staff development (SD), conflict resolution (CR), and managing-the-school (MS): this study of 40 New York City principals found that the total of their creative (EP and SD) administrative behaviors accounted for less than 10% of their time; the total of their appellate and intermediary (CR and MS) behaviors for more than 90%;

the theory base of the study fosters the development and testing of hypotheses associating given profiles of administrative behavior to educational results; (for example,

If the administrative behavior profiles of given urban principals can be changed to manifest major emphasis on the EP and SD behaviors (rather than on the CR and MS behaviors), then these principals' schools are likely to produce improved reading achievement scores.);

in essence, the variations of profiles of administrative behaviors as they are found to be related to educational results provide objective tools for the diagnosis and remediation of given building principals' functioning;

2) a feedback system to provide field-centered sets of administrative behaviors under the EP, SD, CR and MS functions from which sub-sets of competencies for use in administrator and supervisor education are derivable.

It is important to note that the list of administrative behaviors produced by this model is not intended to be universal or definitive. It is, however, illustrative of what local school districts and college programs of administrative preparation can produce. The value system which determines the predominance of EP or SD, or CR and/or MS administrative behaviors to obtain the results sought by a school district can be locally developed.

To faculty designing programs of college preparation of future building principals, the model provides access to field-based administrative behaviors from which sets of competencies can be derived. Implicit in each administrative behavior, are sets of interacting competencies. The student of educational administration can master not only a given competency or sets of competencies but can also learn to coordinate and orchestrate the competencies constituting one or more administrative behaviors. Moreover, the model provides a theory base to study the postulated relationships between given profiles of administrative behaviors and the educational results found to be associated with these profiles.[13]

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